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✝ OF ARCHBISHOP JOHN MAXIMOVITCH ✝

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# THE CROSS OF CHRIST

*Sermon on the Raising of the Crosses upon the New Cathedral of the Mother of God, The Joy of All Who Sorrow, in San Francisco*

IN THE NAME of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

*The Cross, preserver of the entire universe; the Cross, adornment of the Church; the Cross, might of kings; the Cross, strengthening of the faithful; the Cross, glory of the angels and scourge of demons.*

Yet a long time before the coming of Christ on earth, when Moses was leading the Israelites to the promised land, when the Israelites had sinned, the Lord sent upon them serpents; but later He commanded Moses to hang a brass serpent on a high tree, on a high pillar, and whoever looked upon this brass serpent would receive healing from the wounds given by the serpents. At that time the brass serpent was a prefiguration of Christ, crucified on the Cross.

And thus the Lord has given us the Cross as an all-powerful assistance and defence against all misfortunes and sorrows. The Lord saved us by the Cross from eternal death! And the Lord helps us by the Cross in this life also.

When there was a terrible persecution of Christians and the Lord was pleased to put an end to it, He revealed the sign of the Cross high in the heavens to Emperor Constantine, and around the Cross was written: *By this conquer!* When Constantine made a sign in the form of a cross, by this sign he conquered the enemy.

Thus the Lord gives us the Cross in order to defend us from all misfortunes, from all evils, in order to defend us from the prince of this world, the devil. Now we are raising the sign of the Cross here over San

[*Continued on inside back cover.*]

+ Archbishop John Maximovitch

Archbishop John Maximovitch
October, 1964
San Francisco, California

Troparion, Tone 3: *By works of godliness hast thou shone forth;*
*Thou hast illuminated the whole Church,*
*Being exalted in the ways of humility;*
*For having been glorified in Athos with ascetic deeds,*
*Thou hast received the name Adornment of Patriarchs.*
*O glorious Niphon, fill with divine graces those who with faith*
*and longing magnify thee.*

*The Life of*

# SAINT NIPHON

## PATRIARCH OF CONSTANTINOPLE, WONDERWORKER OF THE HOLY MOUNTAIN

Commemorated August 11

By ST. NICODEMOS OF THE HOLY MOUNTAIN
*Who edited and enlarged the original of*
*Hieromonk Gabriel, Protos (chief monk) of the Holy Mountain*
*during the lifetime of the Saint*

NIPHON, OUR DIVINE FATHER, was born in the Peloponnesos of parents who were noble and illustrious as measured by the world, but even more illustrious and noble as measured by godliness and virtue. Their names were Manuel and Maria. In baptism he was given the name Nicholas.

When he became old enough, he was sent to a school to learn the sacred letters. From the beginning he had the mind of a mature person, and did not occupy himself with childish activities as did the other children. But like a wise bee he went to wise and virtuous teachers in order to gather the honey of virtue, becoming a hearer and imitator of every good and soul-benefiting lesson and example. So alert was his mind, that in a little while he passed all his fellow students in studies. He would oftentimes read the lives of the holy Fathers and his soul would rejoice. As much as was possible he sought to imitate them in virtue as a wondrous keeper of prudence, giving himself over so eagerly to continence that he would supply the need of his body with bread and water alone. He would struggle similarly in every other virtue.

In those days, there passed by the school a priestmonk, Joseph by name, a profound teacher and very virtuous. Having been in his company and spoken with him sufficiently, the good Nicholas begged him to accept him as a companion without anyone's knowing of it, for he feared that they might hinder him. Joseph received him with joy and, leaving together secretly, he taught him philosophy.[1] Traveling to Epidavros, they heard that in those places there struggled an ascetic named Anthony who was very virtuous and in all things an imitator of Anthony the Great.

1. In the writings of the Fathers, *philosophy* is the term used for the monastic way of life.

When they had spoken with him and heard his divine words, they rejoiced in soul. Then Joseph, receiving the final blessing of the elder, departed. But Nicholas, falling at his feet, implored him with tears to be allowed to remain with him. Anthony reminded him of the labors of asceticism, and especially of his youthfulness, and sought to hinder him. But Nicholas. burning with divine love, insisted all the more. "Whatever you command me, Father, I will obey with joy; only do not deprive me of your company."

When the elder saw the great eagerness of the youth, he received him and gave him a cell and a rule that he might struggle. The good Nicholas gave himself over entirely to the labors of asceticism, imitating the elder in all things. After a little he asked him to clothe him in the monastic garment. The divine Anthony said unto him, "Because, my child, you desire to receive the habit of the monks, know that you must give yourself over to greater struggles and labors of asceticism, lest the enemy find you sleeping and tear you asunder like the treacherous and malicious one he is toward us monks. Wherefore we must struggle, in order to enjoy eternal life, by means of the narrow and arduous way." Having spoken these and many other things unto him, the elder clothed him with the monastic garment, renaming him Niphon.

FROM THAT TIME ON, the blessed Niphon struggled even more in the labors of the monastic life. Whenever there came to him a thought of wealth or the remembrance of parents, of which the enemy did not neglect to remind him in order to deceive him, he would immediately run to the elder and fall at his feet with tears and confess it. Then, being strengthened and comforted by him, he would receive his blessing and return to his cell. His handicraft was calligraphy, and by this he was able to earn his subsistence, as he was an excellent calligrapher. The blessed Niphon observed the following: he never spoke an idle word, he did not laugh in the skete, never did he read an ecclesiastical book without shedding tears, nor yet did he ever speak a single word without the blessing of his elder. Therefore, he became perfect in all aspects of monastic life.

Not much time had passed when Anthony of blessed memory reposed in the Lord. Niphon wept unconsolably over the loss of his spiritual father. When he had buried him and passed much time in silence, he heard that in the city of Narda there had come from the Holy Mountain a few days before a most wise teacher, great in virtue, named Zachary. Desiring to enjoy the fruits of his wisdom and learn the rule of life on the Holy Mountain, he went to him and begged him to allow him to remain in his company. Zachary received him and gave him the desired

instruction. However, because at that time there was great turmoil in the Churches on account of the false synod at Florence, the wise Zachary and the holy Niphon travelled to Askalona, and even to Illyricum and Dalmatia, teaching the Christians in the churches to remain steadfast in Orthodoxy, condemning the heresies of the Latins and the things which had been decided at the false synod in Florence. From there they went to the city of Krogia, whose ruler, George Skenderbey, received them with all honor and reverence, because even before this he had heard their fame, and with great joy he cared for them and kept them with him in his palace, even making the most wise Zachary his spiritual father.

At that time the Emperor John Paleologos died in Constantinople, and in his place reigned his brother Constantine, who called a synod and declared the synod in Florence invalid. After a little time, by judgements which only the Holy God knows, the Turks subdued Constantinople in the year 1453 after Christ. Everywhere there was great consternation because of the bloodshed in the cities, and even these blessed ones hid for a time on a mountain until the confusion ceased. Later they came to the state of Ochrid and remained there in the monastery of the Most Holy Theotokos. In those days the Archbishop of Ochrid, Nicholas, reposed in the Lord. The bishops, clergy, and all the multitude begged the holy Zachary to accept the office of Archbishop; but he said that he was not worthy to take upon himself such a great burden of souls, since he could barely, and only by forcing himself, save his own soul. But they did not cease from entreating him until he accepted the election.

When the holy Zachary had been Archbishop for some days, the blessed Niphon besought him to grant him a blessing to go to the Holy Mountain to dwell in sacred quiet. But the Archbishop said to him, "I greatly need to have you with me, my son, that I might be comforted and my burden be lightened -- and now you seek to leave me? In time of need, friends and children are wanted to help the fathers that are in danger. Deprive me not, my son Niphon, of your most gladdening countenance." While the Archbishop said these things, weeping, tears ran in torrents from the divine Niphon, so much so that he could not answer. Both remained that night keeping vigil. Towards dawn the Archbishop fell into a light sleep and saw in his vision a holy angel who told him to let Niphon go wherever he wished, for he was a chosen vessel of the Holy God. In the morning, the Archbishop prayed and dismissed the divine Niphon, saying, "Go, my son, wherever the Lord guides you. And I, the unworthy one, entreat that He may deem me worthy to see you again in this present life, whenever His Divine Providence so wills."

THEN THE BLESSED NIPHON, taking the blessing of the Archbishop as his companion, hastened to the Holy Mountain like a winged eagle and came to the venerable Monastery of Vatopedi, where he venerated the Holy Sash of the Most Holy Theotokos. He found there many virtuous men of whom he became an eager student. Also, he visited the Sacred Monastery of Pantocrator. Later, going to Karyes, he met the *Protos* of the Mountain, Daniel, a man both virtuous and discerning. When Daniel saw him, he rejoiced and, greeting him with a holy kiss, said to him, "O most wise Niphon, I have heard from many concerning you, and I besought God to deem me worthy to see you before my death. And behold, He has hearkened unto my supplication! Now, therefore, we beseech you to teach the brethren assembled here eagerly on your account." But the humble Niphon said, "I am not worthy to give medicines to healthy and experienced doctors, but am myself in need of healing from them." Then the divine Daniel said to him, "It is not proper to keep the divine words only for yourself, father, but to transmit them also to others for their benefit." Whereupon the Saint bowed his head, and making the usual prostration began to speak his all-wise words. All marvelled at the wisdom of his words, for he was so sweet in speech that no one could separate himself from him, even forgetting bodily food. Going about the skete of Karyes, he found many virtuous men, and his soul rejoiced. Later he went to the cave which is called Crete, where dwelt wondrous ascetics who lived in great hardship. Admiring their extreme patience, he remained with them teaching and being taught, living by his calligraphy.

After this he was invited by the Elders of the Great Lavra of St. Athanasios to go there also, that they might be benefited by his honey-flowing words. Having taught them for a sufficient time, he heard of the Monastery of the Venerable Forerunner (Dionysiou), that there were many virtuous fathers there who kept all the rules of the monastic life in *coenobium* with all things in common, according to the precept of St. Basil the Great, and living a life equal to the angels. Desiring to meet those fathers also, he left the Lavra and went there. When he saw the inaccessibility and severity of the place, so much did the blessed one rejoice that it seemed to him as if he saw the divine Forerunner living in caves and dens and eating grass and wild honey. All that night he remained awake, imploring the venerable Forerunner to deem him worthy to remain there. He made a prostration then to the Abbot and was immediately clothed in the divine and angelic habit. When he was besought by the brothers to receive the priesthood, he said that he was not worthy. Afterwards, being again greatly entreated, he hearkened and was ordained reader, subdeacon, deacon, and priest.

From then on the Saint struggled even more in spiritual endeavors, in vigils, in fasts, in prayers, and in unfeigned love toward all. The thrice-glorious one was a great luminary shining not only upon the Monastery of Dionysiou, but also upon all the Holy Mountain, as one virtuous elder, Petronios, testified. For when he had remained one night with the divine Niphon outside the Monastery, in the middle of the night he stood up to pray, and he saw the Saint standing erect, having his hands lifted up and his eyes toward heaven, wholly filled with a light which ascended to heaven and shone everywhere so much that Petronios fell to the earth like one dead. The Saint lifted up the ecstatic Petronios, who, when he came to himself, fell at his feet. The blessed Niphon sought to hide the divine vision from him, but Petronios secretly told the Abbot of it. The Abbot answered him, "This, Father Petronios, reveals the extreme purity of the man, and that through him many will be enlightened. Speak of this to no one else, lest he hear of it and depart from us, seeking to escape praise, and we be thus deprived of such a man whom the Holy Mountain has granted to us as a refuge and support in our day."

At that time two rulers of Thessalonica came on a pilgrimage to the sacred monasteries of the Holy Mountain. They were present at the Monastery of Dionysiou on the day when the Saint liturgized in the Catholikon (main church), and they marvelled at his honey-flowing teachings. When they returned to their country they made everything concerning the divine Niphon known to the Thessalonians.

IN THOSE DAYS the Metropolitan of Thessalonica, Parthenios, reposed. When the bishops and clergy of the Thessalonians assembled, all with one voice decided to elect as their shepherd the all-wise Niphon. Whereupon two bishops and other clergy were sent to the revered Monastery of Dionysiou. They spoke privately with the Elders and besought them to urge the Saint to accept the election. But they sighed heavily and said, "Who is he, O holy Archbishops, that gives his teacher to others? We are hungry, and how can we give away our food and drink? Has the renowned city of Thessalonica reached such a pass that she has no one worthy to become her shepherd, and you must come to us humble ones to deprive us of the light of our eyes? You can see in what precipitous and inaccessible places we abide, deprived even of the necessities of the body. The Lord sent us this comforter in our afflictions, and now shall we, the unfortunate ones, be deprived of him? This seems to us too difficult. In truth, a great danger threatens us if we lose such a luminary. The whole brotherhood most certainly will experience immeasurable grief." Having said these things, they departed.

Seeing that they had accomplished nothing, the bishops and clergy besought the Holy God and the venerable Forerunner with fervent tears that they might not return unsuccessful. The Saint asked the Abbot about the men, but he received no answer because of the Abbot's extreme sorrow. But the Saint, being enlightened by the grace of the Holy Spirit, understood and said to him, "Do not sorrow, Father, for I will be with you, and I shall pay the common debt (death) here, for so I besought the divine Forerunner when I came to the Monastery, and he heard my petition." The Abbot said to him, "May it be unto you, beloved, as you have asked from the divine Forerunner. However, do you see them concerning whom you ask? They are bishops from Thessalonica, sent by all the clergy and people to take you as their shepherd. And so we will be orphaned from you--especially myself, for I shall see you no more." (He said this enlightened by God, for when the blessed Niphon came the second time to the Monastery the Abbot was dead and indeed saw him no more.) While he said these things he poured forth a river of tears.

Hearing these things, the humble-minded Niphon fell upon the earth in the temple and, wetting the ground with his tears, said, "Who am I, the lowly sinner, to submit my sorely wounded neck to such a heavy yoke?" When the brothers heard the Saint's lamentation, they all ran to the church to see what was the cause of his great grief. Then the Abbot, seeing that all the brotherhood had gathered in the temple, announced to them all things concerning the bishops and clergy. When the brothers heard this, they surrounded the Saint weeping and lamenting so much that the bishops and clergy heard the tumult. They came into the midst of the brethren and placed into the Saint's hands the letters of all the clergy of Thessalonica. Weeping, the Saint said, "I, holy Archbishops, being sorely wounded from my many sins, came here to be quiet and to end my life. How can I leave the way of repentance and take up the care of so many souls, when I am barely able to save my own soul?"

But the bishops said, "Father, do not show yourself contrary to the divine decision, since all with one opinion and voice want you as their shepherd." Then the Abbot, as though enlightened by the Holy Spirit, said, "Go, O precious Father, since thus is the will of God to increase the talent that many might be saved throught you. Always remember this sacred Monastery and the love of ourselves and the brethren, and help us with your frequent prayers and whatever other bodily assistance you are able to supply for our sustenance. We shall always have you in our remembrance as our fellow cenobite and son of our sacred Monastery. This night the Lord commanded me, the unworthy one, not to obstruct your way."

Having said these things, he kissed the blessed Niphon repeatedly, as did all the brothers. Finally he said, "My fathers and brothers, may the will of the Lord be done as you have determined. Yet, a great danger falls upon me the unworthy. Pray unto the Lord on my behalf." Thus the bishops took the Saint and departed, rejoicing. When they came to Thessalonica, such a multitude ran to see the Saint and receive his blessing that they were in great distress as to who would get to him first. When Sunday came they ordained him as their Archbishop and shepherd.

After some days, the Saint saw that the Christians were in a state of confusion because of the Latinizers and the innovations of the false synod of Florence, and so daily he taught the divine doctrines of the Apostles and the divine Synods, rejecting totally the innovations and sophistical arguments of the Latins, and exhorting them to keep their Orthodoxy unadulterated. He also comforted them because of the disturbances and trials of the new Moslem rulers, and incited them to endure the afflictions and torments of captivity without complaint for the sake of the hope of the promised good things, and to keep the Faith unwaveringly. He incited the merciless and uncompassionate rich men by his allwise teachings to have mercy and compassion for the poor. He himself was so compassionate a friend of the poor that many times he would go alone by night and take necessities to the sick and infirm. With the sweetness of his words he attracted each one to do the Divine will. He even converted many unbelievers to the Faith of Christ, and daily they turned from their deception. Therefore his fame was known everywhere and many ran to him. His fame reached even to the Great Church of Constantinople, and the Archbishops there desired to enjoy his presence.

AFTER THREE YEARS he was invited as a member of the Holy Synod of Constantinople to assemble with the Archbishops of Constantinople in order to settle certain imperative ecclesiastical matters. This took place by the dispensation of God, so that the light might be set on a higher place and enlighten all. The Saint, therefore, travelled to Constantinople, where he was received with every honor by the Patriarch and Archbishops and by all the clergy and the people because of his virtue and his wise governing of his flock. He also found there his teacher, Zachary, and greeting one another they rejoiced exceedingly. Thus was fulfilled the prophecy of the divine Zachary, who had said that they would meet again in this present life.

But after a few days the most holy Zachary departed unto the Lord, and the divine Niphon buried his sacred relics honorably and reverently. After a short time, in 1486, the Patriarch of Constantinople,

Simeon, also reposed in the Lord, and without delay all the Archbishops and clergy raised the most wise Niphon by royal authority[1] to the Ecumenical Throne as Niphon II, although he was unwilling. Being full of divine zeal in his holy soul, he preached the divine doctrines with a great voice, teaching daily as another Apostle, exhorting, admonishing in moderation, and seeking various ways to drive the wolves far away from the flock of Christ and to establish Orthodoxy. According to one historian of the time, "He taught from the ambon eruditely and wondrously." With his divine and all-wise words he won over even many unbelievers, who would receive divine Baptism from him secretly and, strengthened by his prayers, would deny both homeland and nation, going far away that they might not be endangered by the ungodly.

The Church of Christ therefore rejoiced in having such a luminary shining upon the whole world, so much so that in his time there was not to be found another like unto him. But that hater of good, the devil, could not bear to see such good, and he incited some clerics, scandal-makers, to exile the Saint and send him far from his flock. Forming a faction against the good shepherd, they set upon him with royal authority and expelled him from the Patriarchate in 1489. The divine Niphon, not knowing exactly why he had been expelled with such unreasonable anger, was amazed and saddened, not because he was expelled from the throne but because the Christians would be deprived of salvation. For he knew that all those things working against him were of the evil devil. Wherefore he entreated the Lord to forgive the sin of the scandal-makers and to grant them repentance. As for him, he travelled on his way rejoicing because he was freed from cares and was able to enjoy his desired quiet. He went to Sozopolis and lived in quiet in the Monastery of the venerable Forerunner, which he desired with all his soul, and lived a most wonderful life, so that his fame spread to all those places and the Christians came eagerly to see him and to hear his soul-benefiting teaching.

After spending two years in the monastery, he was again recalled to Constantinople and ascended the Ecumenical throne for the second time. Once again the light shone upon the lampstand and the whole world was enlightened with his frequent teaching. But again, not being able to bear the presence of the Saint, the devil devised against him yet another method to expel him again. One day, while returning to the Patriarchate from the church in which he had liturgized, he unexpectedly chanced to meet the Sultan on the way. Halting for a little, he greeted him as was

1. The Turkish law required that the approval of the Sultan be obtained before anyone could be instated or deposed as the Ecumenical Patriarch, as the latter also possessed civil authority over all Christians (including heretics in the class of "Christians")--the so-called *millet* or "nation."

proper. But the proud Sultan, desiring honor equal to God, reviled the Saint for not knowing how to honor kings as he ought. But he, the humble-minded one, said nothing, and departed saying to himself, "This also is a device of yours, wicked devil." When the Sultan arrived at the palace he ordered that the Saint be exiled to Adrianopolis, and that soldiers be assigned to guard him there. Those who accompanied him on the way did many evils to him, but God preserved him unharmed. There they allowed him to live in a church of St. Stephen under heavy guard. But the Saint thanked God that the church of the First Martyr had been given him as a comfort, and he rejoiced and glorified the Lord, to Whom he surrendered himself with all his soul, having trust in no human aid.

SINCE THE FAME of the Saint had spread even to Vlachia (Roumania), the Prince, Radoulos, desired to see him. When he had gone to the reigning city to pay the royal taxes, he passed through Adrianopolis; by using every means he received permission from the royal ministers to meet the Saint. When he came to the Saint, he bowed his head and venerated him with great reverence, kissing his holy right hand with immeasurable emotion. He then said, "Holy Master, I have desired fervently to be deemed worthy to behold your all-blessed countenance and to receive your blessing. May God be glorified Who has deemed me worthy to enjoy them. However, I am deeply grieved because of the trials you are undergoing." The Saint answered, "Most glorious Prince, we must enter the Kingdom of the Heavens through many afflictions, as the divine Paul writes. And he says elsewhere that *the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us* [Rom. 8:18]. We must therefore endure the conditions of the present life with joy even as the divine Apostles did. When they were flogged by the Jews they rejoiced because they suffered dishonor for the name of the Lord, as the divine Luke records in the Acts of the Apostles. And the blessed Paul writes in his epistles, *Now I rejoice in my sufferings* [Col. 1:24]. The thrice-blessed ones rejoiced in afflictions, enduring them with thanksgiving, because they held that blessed hope. But we unfortunate ones are faint-hearted, and cannot endure."

Hearing these things, the ruler was pierced to the heart and said to him, "I implore your holy Lordship to come to Vlachia to teach us, for we are totally devoid of spiritual instruction and of a teacher and shepherd. There you shall find rest, and all will receive you with joy. Only give me your word, that I may intercede with the impious ones to receive permission." The Saint accepted this and Radoulos interceded and took him with him to Vlachia, where all received him as an apostle of

the Lord. The ruler said to him, "From this day on, Father, we have you as our shepherd to guide us on the way of salvation. You shall have authority in ecclesisatical matters and whatever you command shall be done." The divine Niphon said to him, "I praise your good judgement and pray that you keep it till the end. Yet I beseech that you accept gladly, as spiritual exhortation, whatever I undertake to do for your correction, even if you yourself err. When the common people see the ruler accepting correction unto repentance, then they also are corrected easily. Again, on the other hand, when the ruler tramples upon the law and nullifies the sacred canons, then he becomes a cause of stumbling to all, because men easily turn toward evil." The prince said to the Saint, "Whatever you do, Father, for the profit of our soul, we shall accept with joy."

Then the all-wise Niphon ordered that there be a local synod, that all the priests of the churches, the abbots of the monasteries, and the nobles of the palace might be gathered together with the Prince. When all had assembled, the blessed one began to preach to them from the divine Words and to exhort them all to good ways, with proofs from the God-inspired Scriptures and the divine Fathers, and to urge them to cut off every evil habit. All accepted his honey-flowing teaching, and being convinced by his divine words they sought to correct all their ways and disciplines. The Saint also ordained two bishops and gave them dioceses, admonishing them to care for the flock of Christ because they would give an account for them to the Terrible Judge. Afterwards he turned to the ruler and said in the hearing of all, "And as for you, son Radoulos, who have the authority in your hands, you must admonish all your subjects and chastise the unruly. Be not a respector of persons, neither for the great nor for the small, but let your judgement be just, for judgement is of the Holy God, as the divine Scripture says."

Having taught these things with much humility, the Saint dismissed the synod, keeping the priests and monks who were from distant places for some time in order to correct them. All glorified God because He had sent them such a luminary to guide them to the way of truth, and they called him a new Chrysostom. The Saint liturgized every Sunday and feast day so that all might hasten to the church to hear his teaching, and he sought with all his means to separate them from the bad habit of drunkenness, for almost all were given over to this passion exceedingly. From this habit are born all the deadly sins, and especially unclean fornication and abominable homosexuality, into which many had been lured away. For this reason the all-wise one sought diligently to quench the flame of drunkenness. Through his unceasing teaching a great multitude turned to repentance. He also saved the Orthodox Faith from the

plague of Papism, because at that time the Papal church, after the false synod in Florence, felt it to her advantage to sally forth under the mask of union, seeking to convince the Orthodox that Orthodoxy had also fallen along with Byzantium. Thus she ensnared them easily, pretending that she asked nothing from them in exchange for the protection she offered them except for the simple commemoration of the Pope. And if the blessed Patriarch had not arrested the cunning treachery of the Papal plague, the whole of Vlachia and Moldavia would have suffered the same corruption as their two sister regions of Transylvania and Galicia, where the Unia numbers its followers in the millions.

At this time also (1502) the Holy Synod of Constantinople reinstated him for the third time as Patriarch. But when representatives arrived from Constantinople to inform him of this, he told them that he neither accepted it nor wished even to hear about the Patriarchate.

But what did that hater of good, the devil, again conspire against the Saint in order to hinder his divine preaching? A certain important prince from Bogdania, being evil-mannered and evil-minded, left his fatherland in order to be relieved of the responsibility of ruling and thus abandoned his wife, children, and home. He came to Vlachia and formed a close friendship with Prince Radoulos, and desired to live there and to take another wife. The Prince, although he knew that Bogdanos had a wife, ignored the canons of the Fathers and unlawfully gave him his own sister. When his lawful wife heard this, she wrote a letter to the Saint, lamenting her plight and revealing that he was married and had children. The Saint then called for Bogdanos and spoke to him with meekness and humility, saying that he must abandon this iniquity and receive his lawful wife once more. But he, being ill-mannered and unrepentant, departed threatening the Saint greatly. He then went to the Prince and aroused him aganist the Saint, seeking to drive the latter out of Vlachia.

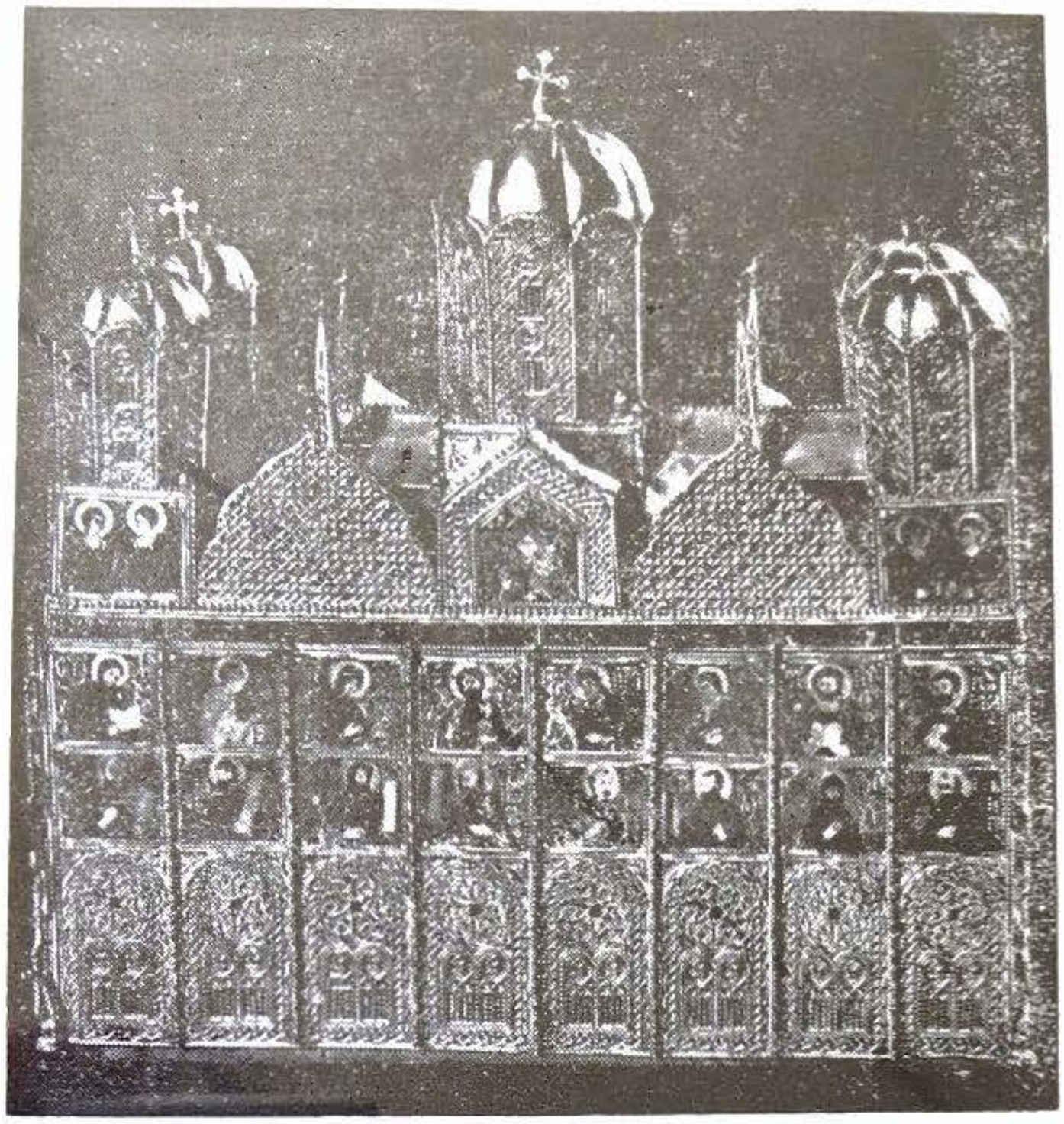
But the divine Niphon, not at all fearing the threats, went to the palace of the Prince and gave him the letter which Bognanos' lawful wife had sent. Afterwards, he opened the Divine Law and entreated him not to disdain the divine decision and canons of our Church. But Radoulos, casting off the mask of his former piety, became enraged, and with a wild manner said to the Saint, "You must not, Master, show such austerity toward us. But you must have meekness and reverence toward rulers. Even before this I have wanted to speak to you because, as soon as I brought you here, you trampled upon and nullified all our traditions and rules, and changed all things according to your own opinion. Therefore, from this day on we desire neither your teaching nor your traditions and rules, for we are men of the world and cannot follow your opinion."

Having heard these unexpected things and given a fitting reply, the Saint left the palace and went to the church, where he ordered the overseers to gather the people. Having taught them well, he put on his episcopal vestments and excommunicated the lawless Bogdanos and those who assisted him in his iniquity, forbidding him to enter the church with his adulteress, as they were transgressors of the law... Then, placing his vestments on the Holy Table and kissing the holy icons, he departed.

When Radoulos heard of these things, he put out a decree through all the country that they should henceforth not consider Niphon their archbishop. Furthermore, if it should be heard of anyone that he gave him bread or anything else, or received him into his house, he would be put to death and his possessions confiscated. Therefore the Saint "gave place to wrath" and went to a border of the country where there was a small dwelling, having all his hope in God Who, as being All-merciful, sent him those things that were necessary, even as of old He had sent food to the Prophet Elias by means of the raven, and also to Daniel by means of Avvakum. One young nobleman from the family of Vassaravi, named Neangos, a spiritual child of the Saint, grieved greatly at seeing him in such straits and, though fearing the anger of the Prince, secretly brought him all his necessities out of reverence.

As Radoulos pondered the curse of the Saint, he feared lest the wrath of God might come upon him suddenly (because though he was stubborn against the Saint, yet he well knew that the latter was in all things just and God-fearing). He found a way, therefore, and brought the Saint to the palace with honor, thinking that he could obtain forgiveness by flatteries. He then said to him, "Most divine, most wise Father, forgive us all the things in which we, as men, have been at fault against you, and your All-Holiness will also have forgiveness from us for those things which you said and did against us. We entreat you not to have any ill-will against us, and we will care for you with all the money and clothes that you need. We will send you with much honor wherever you desire to go, and we will send you even there all the necessities. As for the marriage of Bogdanos, let it not concern you, for he has received forgiveness from the synod of bishops which is in Constantinople. Therefore let your All-Holiness give also your forgiveness as is proper."

Then the divine Niphon sighed and said to him as though speaking to an ordinary man, "Radoulos, I do not want your money or your necessities, nor do I seek any honor from you -- far be it! Do you remember how much you did in order to bring me to Vlachia that I might teach the Word of God? If, therefore, I have committed any transgression, testify to it. I have been appointed by my Lord to censure transgressors,



*The reliquary of St. Niphon, in which reposes the major part of the Saint's relics, now in the Sacred Monastery of Dionysiou on the Holy Mountain*

and I shall not be a partaker in this transgression, nor does any law allow it. You brought me here by yourself, and again by yourself you persecute me, but I shall go wherever the Lord guides me. You, however, will die in iniquity with many afflictions and pains. Immeasurable evils will come upon your land, and then you will seek me, but will not find me."

When the Saint had said these things boldly, he left from thence. Finding his spiritual son, Neangos, he told him privately, "I see, my son, that great wrath is about to come upon this place, and both you and all your family will be endangered. But the all-merciful God will protect you from every evil if you keep the commandments which I gave you. Not only that, but you shall also rise to great honor and your name shall be magnified in all places. Keep me also in remembrance, your spiritual father, and I, if I find boldness before God Who loves mankind, shall beseech Him for you." Having thus spoken, he blessed him and kissed him, but Neangos wept grievously at being orphaned from such a father. Then the Saint took Macarios and Ioasaph, his disciples, and went to Macedonia, and from there to Petolia, teaching and strengthening the Christians. Later he came to the Holy Mountain to the Sacred Monastery of Vatopedi, and the fathers there received him with all respect and joy, glorifying God Who deemed them worthy to enjoy such a luminary and teacher. When the ascetics of the Mountain heard of his coming, they hastened daily to receive his blessing and hear his soul-benefiting teaching.

His disciple Macarios, who was zealous in imitating the virtues of the Saint in all things and struggled on the way of asceticism with many labors, ascended to the peak of divine love, and his heart was aflame with the desire to end his life with a martyr's death. Therefore he revealed his longing to the Saint, who, knowing that his intent was according to the Divine will, told him, "Go, my son, on the way of martyrdom, for according to your eagerness you shall be deemed worthy to receive the crown of martyrdom and to rejoice eternally with the Martyrs and the Righteous Fathers. Sealing him with the sign of the Cross, he blessed him. And it came to pass according to the Saint's prophecy. While travelling to Thessalonica, this man who was *Macarios* (blessed) in truth, preached Christ befroe the Moslems. He was mercilessly tortured and beheaded and he received the crown of martyrdom. These things were revealed to the divine Niphon by the Holy Spirit, and he said to Ioasaph, his other disciple, "Know, son, that today your brother Macarios was perfected through martyrdom, and goes to rejoice in the heavens." Then he took Ioasaph and departed from the Monastery of Vatopedi secretly.

AFTER SOME FORTY YEARS' absence, he returned unrecognized to the Sacred Monastery of Dionysiou. In this Monastery there was the custom, instituted by the founder, that whoever would go there to live the monastic life might be received only if he consented to become mule-driver in order to haul wood and do other work for as long a time as the Abbot specified. Only then would they take him into the Monastery and make him a monk -- or, if he were previously a monk, would then number him among the brethren.

When, therefore, St. Niphon went to the Monastery unrecognized as a lowly old man, after being questioned by the Abbot according to the custom, he was accepted as a novice. He made a prostration and began to serve as mule-driver. His duties were to groom, tend, and water the mules during the day, and at night to keep watch over the sea for pirates. During this time while he was still unrecognized, there came men sent from the Church of Constantinople, who were seeking him in order to raise him once again to the Ecumenical throne by royal authority. But because they were not able to find him, they departed.

One day the Saint was assigned to keep watch on a certain high place opposite the Monastery, for pirates would appear suddenly at that time on the Holy Mountain and take many fathers as prisoners and seize whatever they could. In the midst of the night while the Saint was standing in prayer where he was keeping guard, some virtuous monks keeping vigil round about that place saw a flame which arose from the earth to

heaven. One brother who was on guard with the Saint, and who awoke at that time, saw the Saint as if he were aflame. Terror-stricken, he drew back from the place and hastened to the Monastery, where he declared to all the awesome sight, as did the other monks also. [Today there is a chapel dedicated to St. Niphon on the very spot where he was standing.]

All gathered in the church and entreated the Holy God to reveal to them who this man was upon whom this sign appeared. The Lord hearkened to their entreaty and revealed him in this manner: The Abbot of the Monastery saw in a vision that he was in the temple, and there the divine Forerunner appeared and said to him, "How long will you have the Ecumenical Patriarch, who has saved a myriad of rational souls, as a keeper of beasts? Arise, and call the brethren to meet him and give him proper honor." When the Abbot asked, "Who is this Ecumenical Patriarch?" the holy Forerunner answered, "Niphon, whom yon know as Nicholas, who looks after the animals. Enough is his great humility, at which even the angels in heaven are amazed." When the Abbot awoke, he was filled with great wonder. After much time he came to himself, sounded the *simandron*, and all the brethren gathered. He then recounted unto them his vision, and they learned that the mule-driver was Patriarch Niphon. When the blessed one, as mule-driver, approached the Monastery, all came out with candles and incense and met him with honor.

Immediately, as soon as the wondrous Niphon saw them, he attempted to flee, but they overtook him. He then threw himself upon the earth, wetting it with his tears. The Abbot made a prostration and venerated him, kissing his holy hands, and said unto him, "Enough, enough, O ecumenical luminary, is your great patience! Enough is the utter privation which you have undergone voluntarily. Enough, moreover, is the great humility which you have shown without us wretches knowing it." All the brethren wept -- especially those who had grieved him in ignorance -- and they fell at his sacred feet seeking forgiveness. Then the Saint said with many tears, "For this reason, O my fathers and brothers, did the Lord hide me in this soul-saving place, as I besought him, that I might be saved from the cares of the world and find mercy at His terrible tribunal. For if, perchance, we do not deny fathers, brothers, relatives, every human glory and pursuit of this world, as He Himself commands us, then we are not worthy of following Him. For if we gain the whole world and lose our soul, what is the profit?" And to those who sought his forgiveness he said, "O my children and brethren, they who struggle in virtue must have meekness and love toward their neighbors, and must not be wrathful against them even though they suffer ten thousand injuries from them, for we are all men and none is pure by his own strength."

When the blessed Niphon had thus admonished them that they must not do similar things to others, but that each of them should do his service without anger or complaint, each one helping the other according to his ability, he blessed them and kissed them. Thus he entered the Monastery and for thirteen years struggled with such great hardship that it is impossible for one to narrate in detail all the struggles and labors to which the blessed one subjected himself. Although he was elderly and exhausted from perils and exiles, he served in all the needs of the Monastery as if he were one of the most abject of monks. He constructed many edifices from their foundations, visited the sick, and comforted the afflicted. Many times when I would go and stay there so as to be profited by his soul-benefiting teachings, I saw him digging in the garden, helping at the mill, going down to the harbor for provisions brought by the boats, and laboring together with the laborers so that they would not complain and lose the reward of their labors. Yet in spite of all this, the hater of good did not cease from warring against him. Finding some of his instruments, he aroused them to condemn and slander the Saint, calling him a hypocrite and babbler. He, however, being all-wise, recognized the schemes of satan and entreated God to strengthen him to be able to withstand all temptations to the very end, and to forgive his slanderers and save them as being the Friend of man. So much humility, patience, endurance in hardship, and voluntary poverty did he have that he did not take into account his hierarchal rank, nor that he had been Ecumenical Patriarch, but accounted these things as shadows and dreams.

One time when the Saint saw that the brethren bringing the Monastery's provisions from the *metochia* with the boat were in danger because of a storm, he found a way and entered the boat when they were near the Monastery. O Thy wonders, Christ King! The storm ceased, and there was a great calm. The brethren, falling at his sacred feet, said, "We believe, most reverend Father, that whatever you ask of God He will grant. For this reason we entreat you to pray unto the Lord, as one who has boldness toward Him, that from now on we might travel without danger at sea and bring the provisions to the Monastery without loss." "If perchance you are not negligent in your Rule and the Services, and you do not talk idly nor utter shameful and unbecoming words, the Lord will hearken unto you easily and will free you from every evil circumstance."

When the Saint had said these things, he knelt upon the anchor of the ship and, lifting his eyes and hands to heaven, prayed silently for a long time. When he arose, he blessed the anchor three times and said, "Take care, brethren, that you always put this anchor in a clean place. Whenever danger comes, hang it in the sea and you will travel safely."

From then on this great miracle would take place every time they were in peril at sea. So much did the monks reverence that anchor that whenever they offered incense during the time of a service they would also cense the anchor with piety, thinking that they saw the Saint before them. Whenever a storm would rise on the sea, the brethren would call one to another, "Cast the Patriarch into the sea so the storm will stop." Therefore, that anchor was kept as a valuable treasure in the Monastery for more than one hundred and fifty years.

When the Saint had come to advanced old age – some ninety years – he knew by divine revelation that the time had come for him to depart unto his longed-for Christ. He gathered all the brotherhood and disclosed this to them, exhorting them all to keep the rules of the monastic life exactly and to struggle in every way to be deemed worthy of the Kingdom fo the Heavens. All the brethren wept and mourned their being orphaned of such a Father. Then he said to the Elders, "Ask, my brethren, whatever spiritual matter you desire from my lowliness before I surrender my spirit unto the Lord." And all answered, "We desire, O most holy Father, that you give us in writing your divine blessings that they might be read at the grave of every brother when he dies that he might receive the loosening of sins which he, as a man, has committed." The Saint, being obedient to the end, did not disregard their request, but made prayer unto God with fervent tears that their request might come to pass. He said to his disciple Ioasaph, "Son, write the things that are spoken upon a paper that they might be an everlasting comfort unto the brethren."

When Ioasaph had written the prayers of forgiveness, the Saint said unto him, "As for me, I depart unto the longed-for God. And you, son, go to Constantinople and do all that I commanded you. There you shall receive the crown of martyrdom, that you might rejoice eternally in the heavens." Afterwards, he asked forgiveness from the entire brotherhood and partook of the Immaculate Mysteries. Thus he gave up his blessed soul into the hands of God on the eleventh of the month of August, in the year 1515, at the age of ninety. All the brethren wept over the loss of the good shepherd, and all the fathers that learned of it in the Sketes and Monasteries hastened to kiss the sacred relics. When a great multitude had gathered, they had an all-night vigil, and in the morning, with many present, they piously buried the shining luminary of the world, the steadfast rock of patience, him who had been most enduring in temptations, who had been tried as gold in the furnace and had suffered all things for the love of the Lord.

In this manner did the ever-memorable Niphon live the present life, and with such achievements and struggles and virtues did he shine in the world. Through divine baptism he gave rebirth, as Patriarch, to a multitude of Armenians, Jews, and Moslems, and with his divine and honey-flowing teachings he offered unto the Lord innumerable saved ones. He even offered up unto God his disciples with crowns of martyrdom, for the blessed Ioasaph, after the repose of the Elder, went to Constantinople and, doing as the Saint had commanded him, preached the Holy Trinity before the Hagarenes. He was tortured and finally beheaded, receiving the crown of martyrdom according to the Saint's prophecy.

IT IS TIME for me to narrate all those things that came to pass in Vlachia according to the prophecy of the divine Niphon. When the Saint had departed thence, great confusion came upon the Church of Vlachia, and great scandals arose among the ecclesiastics and the rulers. In the whole land there were great destructive windstorms, drought, and great hunger, and all came to know that these chastisements came from God because the Saint had been driven from there. Therefore Prince Radoulos sent everywhere for the Saint but did not find him, as he foretold.

After the repose of the Saint, Radoulos fell into a dreadful and incurable malady. His whole body became ulcerated and gave forth an unbearable stench, so that no one was able to approach him Thus with many pains he died and was buried in the Monastery of St. Nicholas, called Dalos, that he had built. After his burial, to the terror of those present, his tomb quaked for three days as had the tomb of the Empress Eudoxia in the time of St. John Chrysostom. Fear and trembling overcame all, and they brought to mind the holy Niphon -- that all things had come to pass as he had prophesied. The good Neangos was also in danger, as the divine Father had forewarned him, suffering evils from two tyrannical princes. But according to the prophecy of the Saint, not only was he saved from every danger through his intercessions, but by request of all the people he became Prince of all Hungro-Vlachia.

When he saw that all the prophecies of his spiritual father had been fulfilled, and considering his godly teaching, he was altogether inflamed with divine love and longed to bring his sacred relics to Vlachia, that he and all that land afflicted by so many divine plagues might be blessed by his presence; and especially that Radoulos, who was under the Saint's curse, might receive forgiveness. Thus Neangos became a second Theodosios the Less, for just as he had brought the sacred relics of St. John Chrysostom from Koukousos for his mother Eudoxia, in like manner did the God-fearing Neangos do to divine Niphon, the new Chrysostom.

In 1520 he sent two abbots of the monasteries and two important princes to the Holy Mountain, to the Sacred Monastery of Dionysiou, with letters and many gifts that they might bring the holy relics. Upon arriving, they gave the letters to the Abbot of the Monastery, and when they had been read in the presence of all the brethren everyone remained without speaking for a long time.

Then the fathers said to the emissaries: "Most reverend abbots and most pious princes, we neither disdain the command of the prince, nor yet do we dare to stretch forth a hand upon the grave of the holy one. Indeed, we wretches cannot bear to suffer the loss of such a treasure which is the comfort of our Monastery... We do not dare to dig, but do yourselves whatever you desire." Then one of the princes, the Grand Logothete, took a mattock and, making the sign of the Life-creating Cross, said, "Supported by the faith and piety of my Prince, I take up this task and hope in the intercessions of the Saint that I shall not incur any harm." Having spoken thus, he began digging. As he approached the holy relics -- O Thy unspeakable wonders, Christ! -- that whole place was filled by an inexpressible fragrance. When all the brethren had gathered, they had an all-night vigil. The word went out to all the kellia and Sketes and Monasteries that were nearby Whereupon the fathers hastened with faith and piety to venerate the holy relics.

The almighty God, desiring to glorify the Saint even after his repose for his exeedingly great struggles and the labors of his asceticism, brought about many miracles from the Saint's relics at this time. After three days, the emissaries took the holy relics and set out for Vlachia accompanied by some monks of the Monastery. When they had crossed the Danube, they sent a message to the Prince, who immediately sent bishops, priests, deacons, and monks to meet the Saint. When the holy relics approached the city of Bucharest, he himself, the God-fearing ruler, came out with all the multitude of the people, who were bearing candles and incense. Embracing the reliquary, he kissed the holy relics with godly fear and tears. He then took them, in the reliquary, upon his shoulders and, with the foremost princes, came to the Monastery of Dalos and placed the holy relics upon the grave of Radoulos. They then had an all night vigil and prayed fervently unto the Saint that he might forgive the transgressions of the miserable Radoulos.

In the midst of the night while they were keeping vigil, Neangos the Prince fell asleep. He saw in a vision that the grave of Radoulos opened and his body appeared, blackened. From all his members pus was running, and there came forth an unbearable stench. Because Neangos was not able to bear it, he implored the Saint to have mercy upon the

wretched Radoulos. Immediately, then, he saw that there gushed forth a fountain from the case of the holy relics, and that the Saint washed the whole of that foul body of Radoulos and made it most beautiful and most luminous. Thus again the grave of Radoulos closed. The Saint approached Neangos and said to him, "Behold, son, I have hearkened unto your supplication. Only now I beseech you to have peace always with your subjects, and to send my relics to my Monastery for the comfort of the brethren who struggle there." After saying this, he went and entered again into the reliquary. Upon awakening, the God-loving Neangos remained engrossed in thought for a long time as he considered all that he had seen. When he came to himself, he cried, "Glory to Thee, Heavenly King, Who hast glorified Thy beloved slave, St Niphon, with inexpressible glory." Then the psalmodies ceased, and the Prince narrated to all those things which he had seen in his vision, and all glorified God. In the morning, when the Divine Liturgy took place, a great multitude gathered even from the outlying parts of Vlachia and brought with them innumerable sick who kissed the Saint with tears and faith and received their health. The lame were restored, the blind saw, they who were tormented by afflictions were cured, and practically every illness was expelled from all those who resorted to the Saint with fear.

When the Prince saw that the Saint worked wonders daily, he gathered a synod and they decreed that the Saint be celebrated on the eleventh of the month of August, the day upon which he reposed, and they composed his whole Service. After this, the God-reverencing Neangos ordered that they make a golden reliquary with precious stones and adorned with most beautiful enamel. On its cover the Saint was depicted, and on the front Neangos was pictured kneeling. In this he placed the relics of the Saint, and kept only the holy skull and a hand, with the consent of the fathers. In return, he gave them the all-venerable skull of the glorious Forerunner and Baptist John, in a golden case adorned with precious stones which he sent to the Sacred Monastery of Dionysiou together with the holy relics of St. Niphon. He gave to the fathers also much assistance, and reconstructed from their foundations many buildings of the Monastery. For all these things he is commemorated unceasingly as founder. As for the head and hand of the divine Niphon, the ever-memorable Neangos had them with him wherever he went, for sanctification and the turning away of every evil, until he reposed. After his repose, he dedicated them to Arzesi, the beautiful monastery which he had built. They are found there to this very day, to the glory of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

# THE SPIRITUAL INSTRUCTIONS

## TO LAYMEN AND MONKS

*Of Our Father Among the Saints*

## ST. SERAPHIM OF SAROV

### XXIV

### *PEACE OF SOUL*

NOTHING IS BETTER than peace in Christ; in it is destroyed every warfare of the spirits of the air and earth: *For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places* (Eph. 6: 12).

It is the mark of a wise soul when a man plunges his mind within himself and has activity in his heart.

Then the grace of God overshadows him, and he is in a peaceful state, and by means of this also in a most peaceful state: peaceful, that is, with a good conscience; and most peaceful, for the mind beholds within itself the grace of the Holy Spirit, according to the word of God: *And His place is in peace* (Ps. 75: 3).

Can one, seeing the sun with one's sensuous eyes, not rejoice? But how much more joyful it is when the mind sees with its inner eye the Sun of justice, Christ! Then in truth one rejoices with angelic joy; of this the Apostle too said: *Our conversation is in heaven* (Philip. 3: 20).

When one walks in a peaceful state, it is as if one ladles out spiritual gifts with a spoon.

The Holy Fathers, being in a peaceful state and being overshadowed by Divine grace, lived long.

When a man enters into a peaceful state, he can give out from himself and also upon others light for the enlightenment of the mind; but before this a man must repeat these words of the prophetess (Hannah): *Let not high-sounding words come out of your mouth* (I Kings [Samuel] 2:3), and the words of the Lord: *Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye* (St. Matt. 7:5).

This peace, like some priceless treasure, our Lord Jesus Christ left to His disciples before His death, saying: *Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you* (St. John 14: 27). Of it the Apostle likewise speaks: *And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus* (Philip. 4: 7).

And so we must concentrate all our thoughts, desires, and actions in order to receive the peace of God and to cry out ever with the Church: *O Lord our God, give us peace* (Isaiah 26: 12).

## XXV

## *PRESERVING PEACE OF SOUL*

ONE MUST BY EVERY MEANS strive to preserve peace of soul and not to be disturbed by offenses from others; for this one must in every way strive to restrain anger and by means of attentiveness to keep the mind and heart from improper feelings.

And therefore we must bear offenses from others with equanimity and accustom ourselves to such a disposition of spirit that these offenses seem to concern not us, but others.

Such a practice can give quietness to the human heart and make it a dwelling for God Himself.

An example of such angerlessness we see in St. Gregory the Wonderworker, from whom a certain prostitute in a public place asked recompense, as if for a sin he had committed with her; and he, not becoming in the least angry with her, meekly said to a certain friend of his: give her quickly the sum she demands. The woman had no sooner taken the unjust recompense than she was subjected to the attack of a demon; and the Saint drove the demon out of her by prayer (Lives of Saints, Nov. 17).

If, however, it is impossible not to be disturbed, then at least one must strive to restrain the tongue, according to the Psalmist: *I was troubled, and spoke not* (Ps. 76:5).

In this case we may take as an example Sts. Spyridon of Trimithoundos and Ephraim the Syrian. The first (Lives of Saints, Dec. 12) bore an offense thus: When, at the demand of the Greek Emperor, he entered the Palace, one of the servants who had been in the Emperor's chamber , taking him for a beggar, burst out laughing at him, did not allow him into the chambers, and then hit him on the cheek. St. Spyridon, being gentle, in accordance with the word of the Lord, turned the other to him also (St. Matt. 5: 39). St. Ephraim (Lives of Saints, Jan. 28), while fasting in the wilderness, was deprived of food by a disciple in this fashion: The disciple, carrying food to him, accidentally shattered the dish on the way. The Saint, seeing the sorrowing disciple, said to him: Do not be sad, brother; if the food did not desire to come to us, then we will go to it. And he went, sat down beside the shattered dish and, gathering the food, ate it: so without anger was he.

And in what fashion to vanquish anger one may see from the Life of St. Paisius the Great (Lives of Saints, June 19), who asked the Lord Jesus Christ, Who had appeared to him, to free him from anger; and Christ said to him: If you wish to vanquish anger and rage together, desire nothing, neither hate anyone nor belittle anyone.

In order to preserve peace of soul, one must remove from oneself despondency and strive to have a joyful spirit and not a sad one, according to the word of Sirach: *For sorrow has killed many, and there is no profit therein* (Sirach, or Ecclesiasticus, 30: 23).

When a man has a great insufficiency of those things needed for the body, it is difficult to vanquish despondency. But this, of course, is applicable to weak souls.

For the preservation of peace of soul one must likewise by every means flee from judgement of others. By not judging and by silence peace of soul is maintained: when a man is in such a state, he receives Divine revelations.

In order to free oneself from judging, one must take heed of oneself, not to accept outside thoughts from anyone and to be dead to everything.

For the preservation of peace of soul one must more often enter into oneself and ask: where am I?

At the same time one must watch that the bodily senses, especially sight, serve for the inner man and do not distract the soul by means of sensuous objects: for they only receive grace-bearing gifts who have interior activity and are vigilant over their souls.

## XXVI

## *GUARDING THE HEART*

WE MUST VIGILANTLY guard our heart from unfitting thoughts and impressions, according to the word of the writer of Proverbs: *Keep thine heart with the utmost care; for out of these are the issues of life* (Proverbs 4:23).

From constant guarding of the heart purity is born in it, purity in which is beheld the Lord, according to the assurance of eternal Truth: *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God* (St. Matt. 5:8).

Whatever of that which is best has flowed into the heart, we should not pour out without need: for that which has been gathered can be free of danger from visible and invisible enemies only when it is guarded in the interior of the heart.

The heart boils, being kindled by Divine fire, only when there is living water in it; but when this is poured out, it grows cold and a man freezes.

# THE AMERICAN ORTHODOX MISSION

## I. THE CHURCH OF STS. THEODORE IN BUFFALO, N.Y.

### *Introduction: The Orthodox Mission in America*

THE AMERICAN ORTHODOX MISSION had a promising beginning before the Russian Revolution, with its center first in San Francisco and then in New York. All national communities in America came under one jurisdiction: the Russian Orthodox Church, which started the American Mission and watched over it in its early years. Although at this early date the languages of the old countries were still in use by Orthodox emigrants in America, it was planned that eventually the sole language of Orthodoxy in America would be English, and preparations were already being made for this. The American Mission was thus distinct from the Alaskan Mission, which utilized the indigenous languages there.

In America, however, just as elsewhere in the world, the Russian Revolution marked a crisis and a turning point for Orthodoxy. Anarchy entered Church life: guidance and help were no longer to be expected from Russia, which even today after fifty years remains in an abnormal and enslaved condition, as does the official church which is allowed to exist there; abroad, schisms as well as the difficult conditions of the emigration weakened the position of the Russian Church Outside of Russia, which logically should have taken over all the Russian missions. As a consequence, the American Mission as such simply ceased to function, and Church life thereafter came to be organized on national, jurisdictional lines. Under the given conditions, this sad turn of affairs was perhaps inevitable; the canons regarding missionary territories and overlapping jurisdictions of bishops simply could not be applied.

In recent years there has been talk once more of American Orthodoxy, and an attempt has been begun to end jurisdictional irregularities. In 1960 there was formed a "Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas," with representation from many jurisdictions (some of them admittedly not too "canonical"), with the idea that it would eventually be transformed into the Synod of an American Orthodox Church.

But quite apart from the fact that this "Standing Conference" has not yet resolved some of the jurisdictional conflicts and canonical difficulties among its own members, it has, more importantly, failed even to take cognizance of a basic fact of Orthodox life in America today: Orthodoxy in America has to a large extent lost contact with its own roots; it has become diluted and in some cases virtually unrecognizable. Whether one judges by the most superficial characteristics or the most profound, whether by the appearance and deportment of clergy and laymen, or by the total absence of monastic life and the virtual disappearance of traditional Orthodox piety and spirituality, it cannot be doubted that Orthodoxy in America, as represented by the jurisdictions on the "Standing Conference," is well on the way to losing completely its Orthodox character. A symptom of this (not a cause, for it simply expresses what has already happened) is the eager participation by American clergy, led by their hierarchs, in the ecumenical movement; being already more Catholic or Protestant than Orthodox in spirit, they sense their affinity with Western heterodoxy, and the amalgamation of their jurisdictions will occur just in time for them all to become part of the Papal pan-religious sect of the future.

To some extent, of course, Orthodoxy in America merely shares in the decline of Orthodoxy noticeable in many parts of the world, taking a more acute form here due to minimal contact with genuine Orthodox centers and long exposure to the local heterodox or simply pagan environment.

TO THE WIDESPREAD movement of Orthodoxy in the last fifty years toward apostasy and heterodoxy there remains, however, one striking exception: the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia; and it is surely providential for American Orthodoxy that this Church, since World War II, has established its headquarters and a number of spiritual centers on this continent. No one pretends that the ordinary members of this Church are "holier" than others -- although she has had saints, too -- but neither can anyone deny that her hierarchs, almost alone in world

Orthodoxy today, have stood firmly against the general movement of compromise and falling away from the Faith. The very existence of such a Church, quite apart from her missionary activity, has a providential meaning for the world: she is called, as St. John of Kronstadt prophesied before the Revolution and as her hierarchs and knowledgeable members realize today, to witness genuine Orthodoxy throughout the world before the world's end; her existence constitutes, in fact, an involuntary mission to every continent, as long as she remains true to her calling.

Especially in the last few years this mission has become conscious of itself and has begun to bear fruit, in America as elsewhere. The Russian Church Outside of Russia possesses the only serious monastic institutions, both for men and women, to be found in America today; by her members is published a greater variety of basic Orthodox material in English (prayer books, services, Lives and writings of Saints, *etc.*) than by all the other American jurisdictions combined; among her members, both Russian and English-speaking, is an acute missionary awareness of the distinctiveness of the Church of Christ as against heterodoxy and diluted Orthodoxy; and two of her monasteries -- Holy Trinity (Russian) Monastery in Jordanville, New York, and Holy Transfiguration (Greek) Monastery in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, have become spiritual centers and models of Orthodoxy for numbers of informed converts today.

All this must be realized in order to see, quite concretely, upon what foundation a true American Orthodox Mission can be built. It cannot be built upon "Americanism" or upon mere emphasis on the English language; it cannot be built upon "unity," which heretics also can possess; it can only be built upon Orthodoxy. True Orthodoxy transcends the barriers of nation and language; and thus it is that the Orthodox jurisdiction in America with perhaps the strongest national awareness has established spiritual contact with Americans thirsting for truth and has become for them -- as indeed for the entire world -- a beacon of genuine Orthodoxy, not because she is herself perfect, certainly not because she is Russian, but because she upholds the standard of truth for all to see. And that is why the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, in these late days, has been called to take a leading role in the further development of the Orthodox Mission in America.

*The American Orthodox Mission, 1968*

TO PERSONS AWARE of all this it was not at all unexpected when, in January of this year, Fr. Neketas Palassis left the Greek Archdiocese in Seattle to form his own missionary parish in that city within

the jurisdiction of the Russian Church Outside of Russia (see *The Orthodox Word*, 1968, no. 1, p. 37). The considerable comment that was evoked by this event in the Orthodox press was not at all to the point, and in fact its intent seemed rather to cover the event with smoke by emphasizing extraneous factors rather than to grasp its significance. Even though a large number of his flock followed Fr. Neketas, observers in most jurisdictions seemed content to view it as an individual and isolated phenomenon.

By its very nature, however, this event could not remain isolated. For Fr. Neketas left a jurisdiction whose leadership was no longer concerned with preaching the truth and defending the Church of Christ, but in fact puts obstacles in the path of her members who would do these things. Fr. Neketas' move, therefore, was a matter of conscience and principle, and as such was a sign to Orthodox in America of the nature of these perilous times, and an indication of a clear course of action in facing them. Those who looked beneath the surface of events could see that Fr. Neketas would be followed by others.

On Easter Sunday, April 12 (25), the entire congregation of Sts. Theodore Orthodox Church in Buffalo, New York, together with its pastor, the Very Rev. George Lambros, was released by the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese of Toledo and received under the protection of the Russian Church Outside of Russia. Again, one will doubtless hear it said, Orthodox "unity" in America has been offended. But a closer look reveals the contrary: for this parish the question of unity has been solved--by subordinating it to the question of Orthodoxy, the very foundation of unity in the Church of Christ.

In the May, 1968, Bulletin of Sts. Theodore Orthodox Church one may read: "Our decision to petition our present Diocese was the climax of long and careful soul-searching, prayer and deliberation by all of us, singly, in groups, in committee, and in general parish sessions. We rejoice in our union with a Diocese whose main concern is Orthodoxy -- the Ark of Salvation -- pure and undefiled as transmitted by the Holy Church Fathers."

*Something of the backgound of this decision and of the parish were described by the wife of the priest of this parish, Matushka Mary Lambros, in a letter to* The Orthodox Word:

SINCE OUR BEGINNING, thanks to the intercession of our powerful Patron Saints, we have been immeasurably blessed. We are poor, but we have never lacked for anything. Whenever a need arose, someone came to fill it. When we needed Icons, two talented Iconographers ap-

peared. When we needed vestments, a tailor joined the parish. And so it has been with everything.

Sts. Theodore people are of Russian, Greek, Syrian, Ukrainian, Austrian, German, Belgian, Spanish, Welch, Polish, Scandinavian and just plain American descent. Some are converts: in some families the wife, in others the husband, and in others the whole family. There are also "home-grown" Orthodox and, thank God, a number of "D. P.'s", who in spite of what you may read in some places are a great spiritual asset, and are most devoutly and most thoroughly Orthodox.

Sts. Theodore parish began in 1964 with six families, Fr. George, and faith. With God's help we were able to obtain our church property from a Unitarian group. The inside, of course, looked like a meeting hall. Father and the parishioners working together, sanded and refinished the floors, raised the eastern end for the Altar, constructed the woodwork part of the Iconostasis, hand-made the candlestands from pieces of brass gleaned in out-of-the-way shops, sewed the banners and the vestments -- in short, transformed the building into an Orthodox church.

We were particularly blessed in having our Icons painted by the Koufos brothers, Father Philip and Theodore, who studied Icon painting at Holy Trinity Monastery under Father Cyprian and Father Alypy.

The temple was dedicated on Palm Sunday 1965, by Metropolitan Michael Shaheen of the Antiochian Archdiocese of Toledo, Ohio and Dependencies. Although we had but one Syrian family among us, we petitioned Metropolitan Michael to accept us because of his emphasis on the use of English. This seemed the most vital consideration for us, since our ethnic backgrounds are so diverse that English is the only language we all understand.

Since then we have grown -- not rapidly, but steadily -- and now we are eighteen families. As we have grown, we have been faced with the fact that there is something more vital than the English language: *Orthodoxy*. With ecumenism rampant around us -- especially in our area -- the converts among us declared that they did not become Orthodox to be swallowed up by the heterodox. The "born" Orthodox feared for the purity of their Faith. And so we searched for an Orthodox harbor in the ecumenical storm -- and found it in our present diocese. We were, and are, most thankful to be received into the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia.

Sts. Theodore's people are warm-hearted, hard-working, down-to-earth people. Father George is of Greek parentage, 42 years old, born

and raised in America. Since the parish is so small and poor, he supports his wife and son, Theodore, as a Social Case Worker. He is a quiet, unassuming person, disliking the "limelight," yet occasionally forced to be conspicious in defense of Orthodoxy against the ecumenical flood-tide around us.

One such occasion that comes to mind was a wedding in one of the larger Orthodox churches in Buffalo. Fr. George was invited to participate. At the ceremony he discovered that a Roman Catholic priest was also going to take part. Fr. George tried to reason with the other Orthodox priest, but was told that "it's all right -- we are all brothers." There was some agitation when Fr. George stepped down, and in spite of pleas and exhortations remained "unreasonable" and "un-Christian" and would not take part.

*The parish of Sts. Theodore was received under the protection of His Eminence Archbishop Averky of Syracuse and Holy Trinity Monastery, and willingly accepted the old (Julian) calendar in place of the new calendar which is used in the Patriarchate of Antioch. The Archbishop's greeting to his new flock was read by Father George at the Easter Liturgy:*

## CHRIST IS RISEN!

Very Reverend and Beloved in the Lord Father and All Brothers and Sisters Beloved in the Lord:

I heartily greet you with the ever-joyful Paschal greeting and prayerfully wish you to preserve to the end faithfulness to the Risen Christ in constant spiritual peace and joy in the troubled times we are now enduring.

With particular spiritual joy on my part I am informing you that on this very day of this great and radiant "Feast of feasts and Triumph of triumphs" you are received into the bosom of our Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, which is now the only Orthodox Church in the world which sincerely wants to preserve the unaltered succession of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, all her pious disciplines and traditions, without any change to please *this world which lieth in wickedness* (I John 5: 19) and wants to remain faithful to her Lord and Saviour, Who on the third day arose with glory from the dead.

My dear ones! Henceforth my beloved children! Not looking at any of the temptations with which the contemporary world is now so filled, *work out your own salvation with fear and trembling* (Philip. 2: 12), always remembering the joyful and, for us, consoling promise of the Risen

Lord to all His true followers: *For lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the age. Amen.* (St. Matt. 28: 20).

Your intercessor and henceforth your Archpastor,

Humble Averky,
Archbishop of Syracuse and
Holy Trinity Monastery

Iconostasis of Sts. Theodore Orthodox Church, painted in Byzantine style by Father Philip and Theodore Koufos.

*Right:* Archbishop Averky with Father George Lambros at the banquet during the Archbishop's first visitation of the parish in June of this year.

*On Sunday, June 10 (23), the first visitation of the parish by Archbishop Averky became the occasion for the triumphant celebration of the parish's new tie. This was reported as follows in* Orthodox Russia *(1968, no. 12):*

THE SERVICE WAS celebrated almost entirely in the English language, since the parishioners do not understand Russian. The magnificent church, with a finely-executed iconostasis painted in ancient Byzantine style, and with numerous lamps burning, was completely filled with the devout, all the more so since there were also present for the solemnity the Russian parishioners from the Russian parish of St. Nicholas in Buffalo, together with their pastor, Mitred Archpriest Aristarch Kotsubinsky. The Archbishop came from Holy Trinity Monastery together with Abbot Flor, Fr. Adrian Gan, Archdeacon Pimen, and Subdeacon Tikhon. In addition, for the greater splendor of the solemnity, Hierodeacon John, who knows English well, came in a separate car with three students of the Seminary -- one American and two Russians.

On the eve was celebrated the All-Night Vigil honoring All Saints of Russia, which happened to be commemorated then (second Sunday after Pentecost), and all stikhiras were sung entirely in English by the students. Archbishop Averky, after the reading of the Gospel, gave a sermon on the meaning of the Apostles' Fast (which was to begin on Monday), and this was translated on the spot phrase for phrase into English.

On the next day the Divine Liturgy was celebrated by the same celebrants, and for this three choirs sang: the parish choir in English, the choir of seminarians also in English, and the choir of St. Nicholas church in Church Slavonic. All celebrants, beginning with the Archbishop himself, pronounced almost all the responses in English. The church was overflowing with people and one could sense a particularly prayerful disposition of those who participated in this remarkable celebration. At the end of the Liturgy Archbishop Averky gave a sermon on the meaning of Holy Russia as the stronghold of the true Orthodox Christian Faith for the whole world, and he called upon all to pray to All Saints of Russia for the salvation of Russia and the whole world, which, with the downfall of Orthodox Russia, clearly finds itself today on the brink of destruction. This sermon was likewise translated immediately into English.

After the Divine Liturgy there was a dinner in the church hall for all who participated in the solemnity. The parishioners unanimously

thanked the Archbishop and said that they had never had such a solemnity. In his farewell word the Archbishop wished their parish success and prosperity and invited them to make a pilgrimage to Holy Trinity Monastery.

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MUST WE then conclude that there are no missionaries in America besides those within the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia? Or that all missionary labor outside her is in vain? That would be premature. The new *Unia* has not yet been achieved; and although the apostasy of the other Orthodox Churches has in fact become the official policy of their hierarchs, there are still islands of clergy and laymen in most Churches who resist this. But one must point out what many individuals and a vanguard of parishes already have come to see: the other Orthodox jurisdictions in America today are sinking ships whose captains are guiding them, not into a safe harbor, but into shallow waters amidst hidden rocks and ultimate destruction: the loss of Orthodoxy.

Ecumenism, which has captured these jurisdictions entirely, is the opposite of Mission. The Orthodox Mission flourishes only where there is the awareness of belonging to the one true Church, the religion established by God, and of our responsibility to make this infinite treasure known to those outside the Faith for their salvation. Ecumenism, on the other hand, preaches "dialogue" and compromise with those of other faiths, in the name, ultimately, of humanitarianism and human reason -- the religion of man.

At the present time by God's grace one Orthodox Church in America has had the courage to make her official policy the exact opposite of the accepted policy of ecumenical "dialogue" and betrayal of Orthodoxy. By this policy the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia has justly taken the lead in encouraging and inspiring the new missionary movement of genuine Orthodoxy in America.

*GREAT ORTHODOX HIERARCHS*
*OF THE 19TH & 20TH CENTURIES*

# THE RIGHTEOUS MELETY

## ARCHBISHOP OF KHARKOV, FORMERLY OF IRKUTSK

By ARCHBISHOP JOHN MAXIMOVITCH
Translated by Daniel Olsen

*A brief account of the life of an undoubted candidate for canonization, written to commemorate the 100th anniversary of his death, by a fellow-countryman, himself a holy man whose own life and personal traits strikingly resemble those of the hierarch about whom he writes.*

ARCHBISHOP MELETY was born in the poor family of Leontovich in the Ekaterinoslav region and at baptism was named Michael. His father died when he was very young. His preliminary education he received at home, and then he was sent to Kiev, where he attended first the Seminary Preparatory School, then the Seminary, and finally the Theological Academy.

The students of the Seminary Preparatory School at that time were living in great poverty, just as were their instructors. Simultaneously with their studies they had to provide for themselves as well as their teachers by singing in churches, at weddings, funerals and other such services, and by going to people's homes where they sang spiritual songs and *virshi* -- Ukrainian religious songs -- for which they would receive victuals. Having finished the Seminary, Michael Leontovich entered the Theological Academy, from which had already come canonized hierarchs, among them the three Siberian Wonderworkers -- St. John of Tobolsk, and Sts. Innocent and Sophrony of Irkutsk, also natives of Little Russia.

Michael's mother began to look for a bride for her son, and with this aim during his vacations she visited with him a whole line of families, by which she hoped to make a choice. But it so happened that when they would arrive, the young ladies would be absent, and the mother was compelled to let her son go back to the School, not having found a bride for him. Soon she received from her son a letter in which he wrote, "Do not labor to find a bride for me. I have already found for myself a bride -- the Church of Christ." His mother began to weep, realizing that

her son had decided to become a monk. And having become convinced of the steadfastness of his decision, she agreed to bless him for monasticism.

Shortly after this, Michael Leontovich was tonsured and received the name of Melety and began to go through all the monastic obediences with great fervor. First he was ordained hierodeacon and shortly afterwards hieromonk. Having graduated from the Academy, he remained for some time teaching theology in schools. Afterwards he was appointed Rector of the Mogilev Seminary and Abbot of one of the monasteries in that diocese.

He led an examplary monastic life and, being quite strict with himself, he at the same time showed great love to the students and was for them not so much their leader as he was their father and pastor... Having become beloved by all and gained everyone's respect, he again was returned to Kiev as the Abbot of St. Michael's Monastery with the rank of bishop, a vicar of the Kievan Metropolitanate. His consecration

took place in Kiev. He was a vicar bishop for several years, leading a very strict monastic life, and he labored much in the preaching of the Word of God. After that he was appointed Bishop of Perm and he parted with Holy Kiev and its pious inhabitants with great sorrow. In Perm with even greater degree his spiritual powers disclosed themselves and he was for the city a living vessel of Christ's teaching and of Orthodoxy, until he was transferred to Irkutsk.

Having arrived in Irkutsk, he first of all went to the monastery where rested the holy relics of St. Innocent, and having prayed to his glorious predecessor with great reverence, he entered the city and took charge of his diocese, imitating St. Innocent in his spiritual feats. Not long, however, was he to remain on the Cathedra that had already been sanctified by Sts. Innocent and Sophrony. His frailty did not allow him to remain in a region of such severe climate, and therefore he was transferred to Kharkov as Bishop of Sloboda-Ukraine, replacing Bishop Innocent, who was sent in his place to Irkutsk.

Kharkov, which was the see of the diocese of Sloboda-Ukraine, was the last place for his preparation for eternal life. In Kharkov he lived already as if he were not on this earth. His cell-prayer continued for several hours, and he attained almost a complete abstinence from food, especially during the Great Fast. He was known to have great love for the poor, in many ways helping them and sometimes giving dinners for them in a big yard adjacent to the episcopal residence. The righteous Melety almost never appeared in society, but the people of Kharkov felt that their archpastor had great power of grace and saw in him a great man of God. Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that the righteous Melety in all his ascetic feats managed to fulfill all his duties, there was a man subordinate to him who complained to the Synod that he was very slow in performing his ecclesiastical duties. The righteous hierarch summoned the complainer to him in his cell, and the latter after a short talk understood that he had slandered an innocent and holy man and repented with bitter tears. That happened not long before the hierarch's death.

During the harsh winter of 1840 he became seriously ill. Feeling that he would soon die, he prepared to meet death by prayer and reception of the Holy Mysteries. On February 29, 1840, he gave his soul to the Lord God and was buried in the basement church of the Kharkov Monastery of the Protection of the Theotokos, which also served as the diocesan headquarters.

Soon many miracles began to take place at the grave of the righteous Melety. When the church was being remodeled the incorruptibility of his relics was discovered, which prompted the removal of his coffin

out of the ground and its placement above ground in the new Archiepiscopal Sepulchre. And there it remained until recent times, being placed in a niche near the altar of the basement church behind a small wooden grating. The wall around the coffin was painted with frescos depicting St. Melety, Bishop of Antioch, and the deceased one himself, and over his head there burned a vigil lamp, from which after a panikhida over the righteous one the priest would anoint with oil the faithful who prostrated themselves and kissed his sarcophagus.

The day of the repose of blessed Melety is the 29th of February; therefore, instead of the day of repose, the main day of his commemoration was his name's day, February 12, when the Holy Church glorifies St. Melety of Antioch. On that day a solemn pontifical panikhida was served over the sarcophagus of the righteous Melety in the presence of a great number of faithful. In the course of the whole day continuous panikhidas were served at individual request, and an uninterrupted flow of believers came to the coffin in order to offer their prayers for the reposed hierarch, at the same time asking in their prayers for his intercession. In the courtyard of the diocesan residence there was a dinner offered to the poor people just as was done during his lifetime. Great numbers of people used to come on the 28th of February, when the day of his death was commemorated if it was not a leap year.

There was an exceptionally remarkable case of a healing at the sarcophagus of the righteous Melety in June, 1918. One physician of Kharkov, after performing an operation, had slight cuts which became infected and he became seriously ill; his whole body was covered with sores and he was gripped by fever, and from great suffering he could neither sleep nor eat. The doctors who were treating him did not see any hope for his recovery. Somebody suggested to the wife of the sick man to take her husband to the monastery and bring him to the sarcophagus of the righteous Melety. His wife seized upon this advice as a drowning man grasps at a straw, and the sick man agreed so as not to anger her, although he did not believe that he could be healed. With great difficulty, causing even greater suffering to the sick man, he was taken to a carriage, and from there after the arrival at the monastery he was carried to the basement church where the relics of the holy hierarch lay. The sick man kneeled at the sarcophagus, bowing low over the railing, and the priest began to serve a panikhida. During the panikhida, as he himself later recalled, strong faith began to burn in him and he began to pray. After the panikhida, he could already get up by himself, although

he was supported by others, and he could walk to the carriage. Having arrived home, he fell into a deep sleep. When he awoke after three hours, he asked to be given some food; his pain ceased and he felt quite well. The doctors who came to visit him could only say, "This is a miracle." In a day the healed man could already walk himself to the ruling bishop of the diocese in order to request that a moleben of thanksgiving be served. When we found out from Bishop Neophit of Starobelsk, who was then ruling the diocese of Kharkov, that the blessed Melety had not yet been canonized, and that molebens could not be served, the physician asked then that a solemn panikhida be served, which was performed by the bishop himself in the presence of a great number of faithful. After the panikhida, the miraculously healed physician informed all of the people present what had happened to him, praising aloud the blessed Melety for his healing. After this incident the inhabitants of Kharkov sent to the ruling Metropolitan of Kiev, Anthony (Khrapovitsky), who had just recently been transferred from Kharkov to Kiev, a request asking for the canonization of Melety as a true saint of God.

At that time all of Russia was gripped in the difficult time of war, which prevented this from being brought into reality, but the faith in the sanctity of Archbishop Melety was so well confirmed in the hearts of believers that it became a rule to end a panikhida with these words at the dismissal, *And by his prayers have mercy on us, O Lord, and save us, for Thou art good and the lover of mankind.* And after the completion of the panikhida it became a rule to anoint people with oil from the vigil lamp which burned over the sarcophagus of the holy hierarch, and to sing, *We magnify thee, Holy Father Hierarch Melety, and we honor thy holy memory, for thou art praying for us to Christ our God.*

Shanghai, February 12, 1940

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*From the above account and from other sources (mentioned below) the many similarities between Archbishop Melety and our own Archbishop John Maximovitch may be readily seen. Both were sons of noble families of the Poltava region. Both were short in stature and frail, with weak chests and soft voices. Both were strict fasters, spending the whole of Passion Week without food. Both attended every Church service and spent long hours in cell-prayer (Archbishop Melety's rule of prayer lasted from 9 p.m. to 4 a.m. every day). Both were known as Archbishop-ascetics and were met everywhere with great joy as true fathers and holy men. And after their deaths their sarcophagi were exposed above ground in sepulchres which became centers of pilgrimage and sources of miracles.*

# THE RIGHTEOUS MELETY

*The following brief incidents are extracts from Archbishop Melety's biography in E. Poselyanin's* Lives of Podvizhniki (Ascetics) of the 18th and 19th Centuries *and Bishop Nikodim's 14-volume study with the same title.*

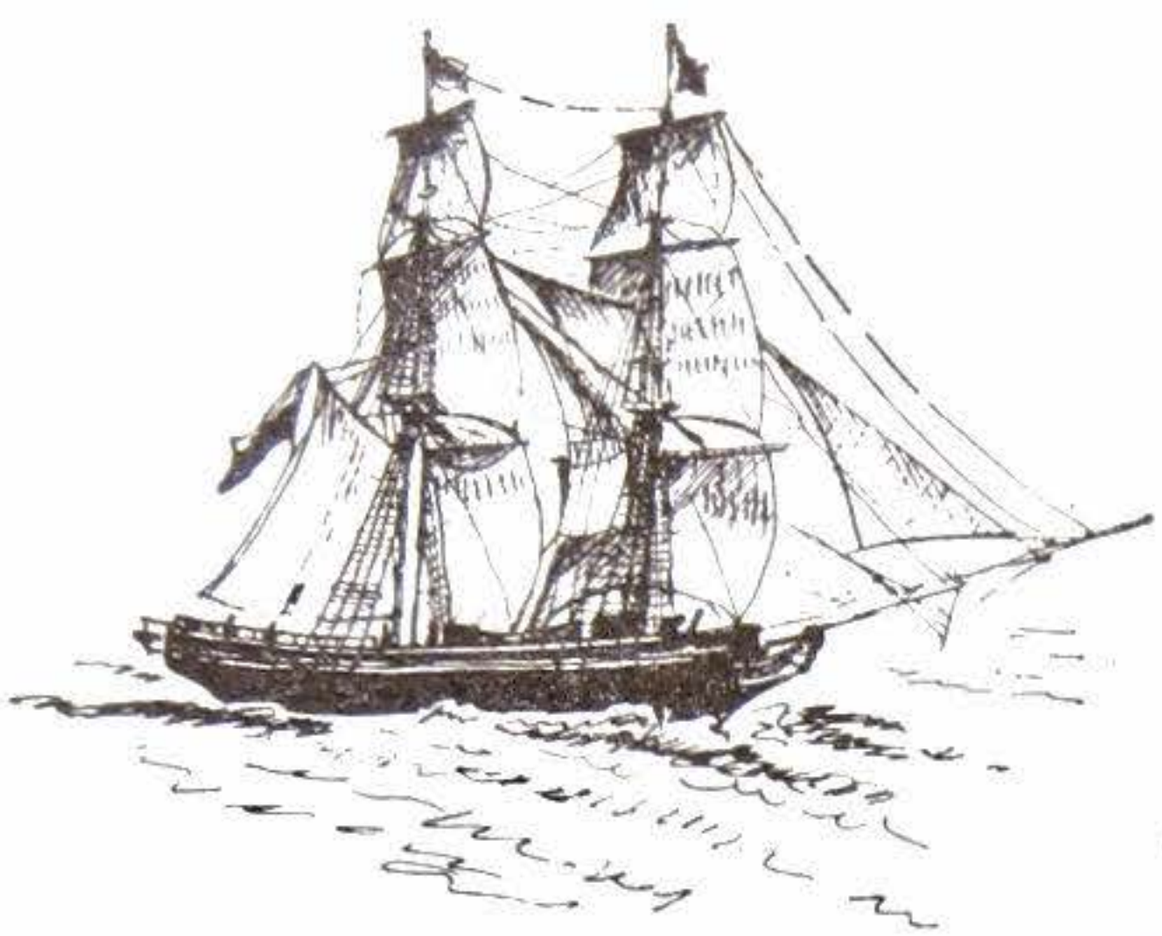
Concerning his feats of all-night prayer and his warfare against the flesh, there is the following incident. Once when he was visiting his diocese, the Most Reverend Melety stopped for the night in a village called Preobrazhensk, of the Zmievsky region. The local priest was informed about this beforehand and, wishing to provide the maximum comfort and peace for his Archbishop, prepared his lodging at his house in special quarters with a comfortable bed and soft bedding. The Archbishop, after the usual greeting and having completed the all-night vigil in this house, retired soon after into the room that had been prepared for him. But, as it later turned out, he retired not for physical rest, but for the rest of his spirit, whose rest is in prayerful conversation with God. It so happened that in the door to this room there was a fairly large opening through which by the flickering vigil lamp one could see inside all the objects in the room. The priest, who could not fall asleep for quite some time, heard a slight rustling in the neighboring room where the Archbishop was staying. With great caution he approached the door with silent steps and began to look into the room. He saw the Archbishop with hands raised upwards, kneeling in his cassock with uncovered head, fervently praying. After having observed this scene for quite a long time, the priest finally stepped away and lay down; but some unexplainable awe prevented him from sleeping. Some time later he again approached the door and saw the same scene -- the prayerful conversation of the hierarch with God continued; and so passed almost the entire night. Only towards morning the saintly hierarch got up, folded his cassock to serve as a headrest, turned to his side, and in such a manner fell asleep, leaving the bed only slightly disturbed in order to assure others that he had slept on it. As the priest woke up at dawn, he immediately hurried to the door and saw again the holy man in the former kneeling position at prayer.

One young man with a devout soul was amazed once when Archbishop Melety was serving by the reverence and prayerful spirit with which the Archbishop celebrated the Divine Liturgy, offering the bloodless sacrifice. Mentally he deemed him to be a great righteous man, and thought at the same time how fortunate must be people who are found worthy to serve with such a saintly man. After the Divine Liturgy a

monk approached him and asked him, in the Archbishop's name, to follow him. He was amazed but automatically followed. The monk led him into the Archbishop's reception room and departed. Soon Melety himself entered. He greeted the bashful youth with great love, and having asked him many questions suddenly offered him to be his cell-attendant. The young man was shocked at the Archbishop's clairvoyance, fell to his feet and with joy accepted his proposal. Later he became a very good monk and remembered with great gratitude this incident which changed his life.

The righteous Melety during the sickness before his death was so weak that he had no strength to pray in a standing position, and he performed his rule of prayer seated in bed, supported by pillows from all sides, with an open book in front of him. In such a condition, tormented by insomnia, he spent quite often night after night. Once, three days before his death, Vladika, seated in such a position, unexpectedly requested his cell-attendant to spend the night in his room. The latter, as he himself later related, felt an unusual awe due to which he could not fall asleep. Vladika noticed it and offered to cover him with his cassock, adding, "Now you will not be afraid, and probably soon you will fall asleep." And indeed the cell-attendant fell asleep instantly. In his sleep he saw a heavenly vision of the quickly approaching blessed repose of Vladika... When the vision ceased, the cell-attendant felt a strong quaking in his whole body and instantly awoke. He saw in front of him the reclining Archbishop with eyes raised toward heaven, his face shining with unearthly joy, and the room itself was illuminated with beams of light. Melety beckoned the awakened cell-attendant and in a soft voice informed him that in three days his death would ensue, about which he asked him to be silent until then. The repose of Melety occurred in exactly three days, soon after he had received the Holy Mysteries, and was most quiet and peaceful.

The relics of Archbishop Melety have been preserved. They have been transferred from the Protection Monastery to the Annunciation Cathedral of Kharkov, and they are venerated in the left wing.



# A PILGRIMAGE TO THE ORTHODOX HOLY PLACES OF AMERICA

## *THE THIRTEENTH PILGRIMAGE*

EVER SINCE THE FALL of Satan and his angels, there has raged a constant warfare between good and evil. Man's domain too has become exposed to the influence of this warfare of unseen angelic powers. Created to inherit eternal blessedness, man, travelling his earthly life, is perpetually in peril of losing his natural likeness to God and being doomed. Such is his lot in *this world that lies in evil*. And it will continue thus until the sound of the Archangel Michael's trumpet will crush Antichrist, who at the end of time will gain almost total dominion over the world; and then will be fulfilled the words of the Psalmist (seen in Slavonic text in the fresco on the cover of this issue), *The swords of the enemy have failed unto the end: and their cities Thou hast destroyed. Their memory hath perished with a noise* (Ps. 9: 7). But until that time man's sole stronghold is Christ's *Church Militant*. There our Lord Himself is present, in the Holy Sacraments, and so are His Most Holy Mother and His friends, the Saints and righteous men. They keep watch, render help and inspire in the battle against the cunning of the evil one, be it solely on the battleground of the human heart, or in apparent enmity between men in the world. The Saints in church, depicted in icons or frescos, gaze at us from above not indifferently, but as living participants, as generals at war, for they themselves waged war and emerged glorious victors in the *Church Triumphant*.

Today, in one of America's most corrupt cities, a city living under the threat of an immense earthquake that could cause it to be swallowed up by the ocean, -- San Francisco -- lie the remains of one of the holiest men to live on this continent, a true warrior of Christ. His relics repose in a beautiful sepulchre, from whence go forth across many nations the report of the glorious deeds of God that take place there...

# SEPULCHRE

*of Archbishop John Maximovitch*

## SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the desires and lusts (Galatians 5: 22-24).

St Paul

GOLD RUSH fever caused the transformation of a small Roman Catholic missionary outpost into a large city -- San Francisco. That fever of burning passion has never left San Francisco; the spirit of this world has had full sway over it, making it the country's most alluring city, promising worldly pleasures. But likewise, ever since the purchase of Alaska by the United States, San Francisco was also the country's first Orthodox Church center and the see of the first Orthodox missionary diocese, whose bishops, with their true pastoral character and their holy deeds of sowing Christ's seed, have become living illustrations of St. Paul's words: *But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound*... (Romans 5: 20)

Today, a century later, these words have become even more applicable. Apart from old vices, within the city satanic services are now openly conducted, and a generation of his servants is being cultivated. But again the grace of God is sent in such measure to no other city but this one, for here lived a true vessel of the holy Spirit in the form of a frail and unattractive little man -- Archbishop John Maximovitch, who spent his last years in San Francisco and whose relics are enshrined in a sepulchre under the majestic cathedral which he completed in this city. Just a glimpse of his spiritual greatness may be seen in an incident related by an eyewitness (*Orthodox Russia*, No. 3, 1968):

*General view of Archbishop John's Sepulchre*

1966

1939

"I suffered very much... In 1939 I sent my daughter to Italy to my husband, who took her to his parents, spent 11 days with her, and then was ordered to Africa. When he left, his parents told my daughter to leave their home; not knowing the language and being only 17 years old, she wrote me despondent letters. I prayed much for two months, I suffered very much, I went every day to the Cathedral in Shanghai; but my faith began to waver. I decided not to go to church any more but to go to some friends instead, and so I didn't hurry to get up earlier. My path went by the Cathedral, and here I heard singing inside the church. I went inside. Vladika John was serving. The altar area was open. Vladika was saying the prayer, *Take, eat, this is My Body*, and *this is My Blood... for the remission of sins*, and after this he got down on his knees and made a full prostration. At this time I saw the Chalice with the Holy Gifts uncovered, and at this time, after Vladika's words, a flame came down from above and descended into the Chalice. The form of the flame was like a tulip, but larger. I never in my life thought that I would see the actual sanctification of the Gifts as a flame. Faith was kindled in me once more. The Lord showed me Vladika's faith, and I was ashamed for my own faintheartedness."

Readers of *The Orthodox Word* will recall the almost identical incident in the Life of St. Sergius of Radonezh (1968, no. 3, p. 108).

During his lifetime Archbishop John was regarded as a saint; many people sent requests for his prayers from all over the world, and many testified of obvious miraculous help. After his death his sepulchre became indeed a holy place: thousands of people visit it annually; by mail many request that prayers be said before his tomb; people send for the ends of candles burned before the tomb for them, and also for drops of oil from the vigil lamp burning there. Every year on the anniversary of Vladika's death, June 19 (July 2), the Divine Liturgy is served in the sepulchre; then, despite the early hour (about dawn), the sepulchre is overflowing with the faithful, and virtually all receive Holy Communion.

The Cathedral, with its five golden domes, is dedicated to the miracle-working Icon of the Mother of God, *The Joy of All Who Sorrow*; it is located on Geary Blvd. (6222), between 26th and 27th Avenues, and is a dominating feature of the northwest part of San Francisco, being visible from many parts of town as well as to travellers approaching by ocean or over the Golden Gate Bridge. The Sepulchre is two stories down under the altar. Its walls are adorned with frescos, done in 1967 by the noted icon-painter Pimen Sofronov, who was the first to bring the great iconographic tradition to the New World.

## SEPULCHRE OF ARCHBISHOP JOHN

ONCE YOU HAVE descended to the lowest basement level, you enter a fairly spacious chapel with a low frescoed ceiling and walls and a glittering marble floor. In the center, surrounded by a myriad of flickering candles, is the sarcophagus, covered by Archbishop John's *mantia*. At the head of the sarcophagus rests Vladika's mitre, on both sides of which are the pontifical dikirion and trikirion (2 and 3-branched candlesticks for blessing), and above them a ripidion (fan) on either side (held over holy objects during services). His archpastoral staff is attached near the foot of the sarcophagus, and at this end is an analogion where the Psalter is read for the repose of Vladika's soul. On an analogion at the other end of the sarcophagus is the chapel's main icon, brought from China: the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple.

The frescos painted by Pimen Sofronov include: on the ceiling, Christ Pantocrator, in a circle over the sarcophagus; on the walls at the sides of the sarcophagus, the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ; on the south wall, directly opposite the entrance, the Protection of the Theotokos, with angels on either side; next to this, on the east wall the Angel of the Lord announcing the Resurrection of Christ to the Mother of God and the myrrh-bearing women, and on the west wall the Archangel Michael (see cover and page 227), who was Vladika's patron saint before he became a monk. Between these large icons are several saints shown in half-stature in ovals: St. John of Tobolsk (Vladika's patron saint), Sts. Boris and Glafira (in memory of Vladika's parents), St. Sergius (for an uncle), and St. Natalia (for his godmother).

Here several nights a week panikhidas are served by local clergy. The oil vigil-lamp on the sarcophagus burns unceasingly. The sepulchre is visited frequently especially by those in various afflictions; they come there to pray for the righteous soul of their beloved Archpastor and ask for his intercession before God. They come with child-like faith just to "complain" of their heartfelt sorrows and misfortunes... And Vladika hears them and grants them help. In Holy Russia, whence he came and whose saints he emulated, in places like this records were kept in special books of testimony of heavenly help granted after prayer with faith to a saint. Let us give here the first few such testimonies from the as yet non-existent record book of Archbishop John's intercessions, in order to strengthen the faith of those who are too far away to visit this holy place in person, in hope that they in turn, wherever they may be, will utter a prayer for the righteous soul of our Vladika, for themselves, and for the sinful laborers of these *Pilgrimages*.

I. A nurse in a San Francisco hospital, G. Vasiliev, found herself one day unable to see with one eye. Her doctor found that she had an inflammation of the nervous optic. In her agony she rushed to church and then to Vladika's tomb and prayed to all the saints to help her. One night when she was especially distressed, after fervent prayer she opened the Gospel to the passage about the blind man who was healed when he was anointed with clay made from the Saviour's spittle, and washed in the pool of Siloam (St. John 9:6-7). Having read this, she exclaimed: "O Lord, if only I could have a drop of this water, I could see again". When the next day she came to the Sepulchre, a lady approached her and said that she had been to Jerusalem and had some water from the pool of Siloam, and that she would give her some next morning, when the Divine Liturgy was to be served there. At dawn she was there and received Holy Communion, and as she applied the water to her eye she felt improvement. The next day she could see.

II. In March, 1967, Mr. Vadim Kazachenko, a long-time altar boy of Vladika's, was struck with four severe ailments at the same time: cirrhosis of the liver, flowage from the gall bladder, pneumonia, and internal bleeding. He was brought to the Veterans' Hospital in a hopeless state, the doctors saying that only a miracle could save him. For a whole month he was in a coma. Funeral arrangements were already made and his relatives were without hope. Constant prayer was offered at Vladika's Sepulchre; as his sister, V. Harvey, relates, it was there that suddenly a strong flame of faith in his recovery was granted to his close ones. After the service of unction was performed over him, there was a remarkable improvement and eventually he was saved. When he was strong enough, he went first to the Sepulchre to have a thanksgiving moleben served.

III. Lance Corporal John Holtz III has great reverence for Vladika. Before leaving for Vietnam, he took a photograph of Vladika from the tomb as a blessing, wearing it always over his heart. He reports in his letters many cases of evidently miraculous preservation from death. Once his squad was ambushed and he alone was neither killed nor wounded.

IV. Olga Skariatin of Monterey suffered from varicose veins for quite some time, until her doctor insisted that she be operated on. After a week in the hospital she came home, but the pain did not stop. She could hardly get out of bed the next morning when she received a letter from Fr. Mitrophan, who often serves panikhidas at the Sepulchre, together with a small peace of cotton saturated with oil from the vigil lamp on Vladika's tomb, and these words: *Rub it on the painful spots, cross yourself and say Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, through the prayers of our dear Vladika heal me from sickness.* She did this and the pain almost immediately stopped, and she was on her feet the next day and has had no trouble since.

*Next issue: A Pilgrimage to Spruce Island, Alaska.*

# THE CROSS OF CHRIST

(*Continued from page 185*)

Francisco; we are raising the Cross that it might guard this city, that it might preserve each of us. The Cross is raised as a sign of the victory of Christ over the devil, as a sign of the victory of Christ over all who rise against Him. The Cross is an all-powerful weapon, the Cross is a sign of victory. And thus, when now the Cross is raised above us and blesses the city of San Francisco, this is our sign, this is our weapon against all temptations, against all misfortunes, against all disasters.

When we shall see from afar the Cross shining above our Cathedral, we shall bring to mind that Christ the Crucified, Christ the All-powerful, Christ our Saviour is with us. When any kind of bad feeling will come into someone's mind, then let him look at this Cross and stop and remember that this Cross will appear also when the fearful trumpets will sound and Christ will come on the clouds; then the sign of the Cross will appear as the sign of Christ, as the sign of the end of the world.

Let the Cross guard us both on our travels and when we are home. Let us, whether from afar, or riding by here, or walking past, behold the holy Cross and bring to mind Christ the Lord crucified for us, Who suffered for our sins in order to grant us the eternal Kingdom when He shall judge the whole world with the Cross. Day and night let the Cross remind us of the Crucified, let it bless us and give help in our affairs here. And let them be done to the glory of God, and not for the fulfillment of our lusts and whims. Let the Cross bless all who travel to San Francisco. When anyone shall sail away from San Francisco, may this Cross bring blessing to him on his journey. When people shall come to us to this city in ships -- let San Francisco meet them with the Cross, as a blessing that their stay here may be safe and for the glory of God. Let the Cross bless all who are in this city, all who come and go. Let it eternally remind us of Christ, Who suffered for us, was crucified, arose, ascended to heaven and preserves us by His Cross. Let us give thanks to the Lord God that He has given us the Cross for His weapon. Let us give thanks to the Lord God and let us not forget that the Cross is our weapon and at the same time reminds us of the Lord's Last Judgement also! We thank Thee, O Lord! Save us, O Lord, by the power of Thy Cross! Save and guard by the power of Thy Cross, through the prayers of the Mother of God and all the Saints!

*Before Thy Cross we bow down, O Master, and Thy holy Resurrection we glorify!* And we shall all be united around this Cross, for the Lord has said: *By this they shall know that ye are My disciples, if ye shall have love one for another.*

*Before Thy Cross we bow down, O Lord, and Thy holy Resurrection we glorify!*

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